THEOSOPHY

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In every age there have been Sages who had mastered the absolute and yet could teach but relative truths. For none yet, born of mortal woman in our *race, has, or could have given out, the whole and the final truth to another man, for every one of us has to find that (to him) final knowledge* in *himself. The greatest adept living can reveal of the Universal Truth only as much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate, and no more.*

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY

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I *To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;*

II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*

III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

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The Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao; the name which can be uttered is not its eternal name.

—The Tao Te King

THEOSOPHY

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THEOSOPHICAL EDUCATION

THE human approach to Theosophy or Truth is twofold. Ideally, it starts with the determination of first principles, as given in the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine,* beginning on page 13. This is the approach natural to Manas as the instrument which leads to deliberated and conscious knowing. Through mind one comes not only to know, but to know that one knows. Manas is the capacity for abstract thinking, and the development of this power is the natural evolutionary task in the cycle—called by Mr. Judge the "age of inquiry"—we are now going through.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the great majority of people in the world do not undertake inquiry into truth in an ideal or "logical" fashion. They begin by asking particular questions growing out of the pain or contradictions of experience. A child carried off by wasting disease or a loved one deprived of life by a sudden accident brings insistent wondering. Why do such things happen? Other chronic puzzles invade peoples' lives, generating questions which have no familiar answers. These were the questions to which Mr. Judge most frequently addressed himself, using the tenets of Karma and Reincarnation for explanation. As he said in his article, "The Synthesis of Occult Science":

> Without Karma and Reincarnation evolution is but a fragment; a process whose beginnings are unknown, and whose outcome cannot be discerned; a glimpse of what might be; a hope

> of what should be. But in the light of Karma and Reincarnation evolution becomes the logic of what *must* be. The links in the chain of being are all filled in, and the circles of reason and of life are complete. Karma gives the eternal law of action, and Reincarnation furnishes the boundless field for its display. Thousands of persons can understand these two principles, apply them as a basis of conduct, and weave them into the fabric of their lives, who may not be able to grasp the complete synthesis of that endless evolution of which these doctrines form so important a part. In thus affording even the superficial thinker and the weak or illogical reasoner a perfect basis for ethics and an unerring guide in life, Theosophy is building toward the future realization of the Universal Brotherhood and the higher evolution of man.

It was this use of Theosophical ideas that Mr. Judge sought most to encourage throughout the pages of the *Path*. Learn, he counseled, to put deep doctrine in the language of ordinary people. He pointed to the example of the Buddha, who spoke to the simplest of men with effect, while having high philosophy for learned minds. What then is the value of metaphysics and the recondite teachings of the Secret Doctrine? H.P.B. replied to this question in *The Key to Theosophy*, pointing out in the section, "Theosophy for the Masses," that for educated people, those whose tendencies and habits of mind are eventually adopted by the great majority, philosophy is of primary importance. Philosophy, she declared, is the only means by which "an intelligent and educated man can avoid the intellectual suicide of believing on blind faith; and it is only by assimilating the strict continuity and logical coherence of the Eastern, if not esoteric, doctrines, that he can realize their truth."

Interestingly, H.P.B. follows this statement by remarking that enthusiasm in such work is essential, since, as Bulwer Lytton said, "truth accomplishes no victories without it." The deep conviction produced by philosophic certainty leads naturally to enthusiasm, since the true work of the soul—its Promethean mission—is to bring knowledge and understanding to all who are ready to receive it. She also quotes Emerson, who said that "every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm."

Serious study, for the active mind, brings an ever-growing awareness of the application of principle in every direction. Quite diverse forms of experience are drawn into a common synthesis,

and as this grasp of the complexity of life grows strong, so also, for those who work for others, grows the ability to express philosophic ideas with simplicity. The habit of looking for simple applications, of reaching after meanings that can be widely understood, becomes natural for one who studies with the idea of helping others in the foreground of the mind.

What about "dogmatism," with which workers for Theosophy are sometimes charged? In an age peculiarly lacking in convictions of any sort, anything affirmed with conviction may be mistaken for dogmatism. For the individual content to drift, lacking in certainties of his own, it may seem natural to regard the convictions of others as some sort of criticism of himself. But conviction is not dogma. Dogma is doctrine which others are required to believe, "without," as the dictionary puts it, "adequate grounds." There is not and never has been any such requirement regarding Theosophy. Back in the 1890s, Mr. Judge asked several members of the American Society to comment on this question. No one who replied felt any presence of dogmatism in Theosophical promulgation. J.D. Buck said in his contribution:

> Alike in the closing section of the *Key to Theosophy* and the opening pages of the *Secret Doctrine,* always and everywhere H. P. Blavatsky was the first to avoid and condemn dogmatism and to repudiate and denounce intellectual bondage, and every leader and writer with whom I am acquainted has followed her lead in this regard. Even the Secret Doctrine, itself a body of laws, philosophy, and science, must stand or fall solely on its merits, and absolutely without extraneous support, other than corroborative facts and coincident testimony.

Another contributor to this collection of statements on dogmatism was Robert Crosbie, who wrote:

> I am a subscriber to all the Theosophical magazines, and own most of the literature published during the past five years; I have never noticed in this mass of literature, or in the words of Theosophical leaders, any dogmatic spirit or tendency to demand a belief in any writer's or teacher's views. To assert positively what one knows cannot be called a dogmatic spirit, and those in the Society who so assert are the last to demand belief in such assertions, even though *they know them to be true*; each individual is left to take what he can assimilate, and, whether he takes part or rejects all of what is said or written by leaders of the movement, such action does not in the least impair his standing in the Society. Never have I known a Theosophist to say or write, "If you do not believe this, you are not one of us";

> such a position would be a dogmatic one as I understand the term. It is the right and the duty of every member to voice his honest conviction, and to give the result of his studies for the benefit of all: all are students, from the leaders to the latest member; there is no dogmatic authority, nor can there be, for "There is no religion (authority) higher than truth." (*Path*, VII, 251.)

What is a Theosophical education and how are its benefits measured? The answer to this question is both clear and obscure. When, in the progress of time and effort, a student is able to respond naturally to any question or problem in the terms of Theosophical teaching, his mental life has achieved some philosophical unity. Clarity of purpose will result, and his ability to concentrate will grow. Even children, as a result of attending a Theosophy School, sometimes show this capacity, as in the case of a youngster who said to a playmate: "Do you think you see me? You really don't, you know; you just see my body."

What one learns in this life from study and reading and taking part in meetings is added to what the ego has brought forward from past lives in the way of basic attitude, knowledge, talent, and inclination. This is soul-knowledge and is sometimes referred to as "character." Such knowledge is not to be confused with "doctrine," which is but the raw material of character-formation. Easy recitation of doctrine has its value, as does any intellectual skill, but growth from the root of one's being, to which all should aspire, and which brings true benefit to the world, is something quite different. A case in point is the life and work of Col. Olcott, who was by no means strong in philosophy. Yet of him H.P.B. wrote during a difficult period:

> As long as I live I shall never go against one who for ten years was my best friend, my staunchest, dearest, most loyal defender and brother, and one, moreover, whom the Master wants to stand firm at his post until his death-day.

Another comment on Olcott by H.P.B., quoted in the *Path* (VII, 250), was this:

> It may be that you and others and even myself do not always agree with Olcott, and find faults in him, but it is Master's wish that he shall be president until his death or that time which is equivalent to it. There is a quality in him that not many have, and that is the power and disposition to stand for his cause against all and every obstacle.

Whatever his faults—and the history of the Movement indicates

that they were sometimes serious—Olcott had learned that much, making him the best available representative of the race to stand for the quest for knowledge, in the form of the Theosophical Society, in the nineteenth century. Intellectual qualities, while of great use, are not paramount in the tasks of the Movement. During the tumultuous days when H.P.B. was completing the manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine,* she wrote to a friend: "But as the ranks thin around us, and one after the other our best intellectual forces depart, to turn into bitter enemies, I say—Blessed are the pure-hearted who have only intuition—for intuition is better than intellect."

If intuition is the best thing to have, then how is this faculty developed? Are there ways of training or awakening the intuition? The answer to this question, if one can be had, might be very close to the reply H.P.B. gave to someone who asked if the capacity to think with the higher mind could be developed. She said (in "Dialogues between the Two Editors"):

> Certainly it can be developed, but only with great difficulty, a firm determination, and through much self-sacrifice. But it is comparatively easy for those who are born with the gift. . . . The person who is endowed with this faculty of thinking about even the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought has, by virtue of that gift which he possesses, a plastic power of formation, so to say, in his very imagination. Whatever such a person may think about, his thought will be so far more intense than the thought of an ordinary person, that by this very intensity it obtains the power of creation.

Mr. Judge's approach to such questions is of distinctive interest. He gave particular attention to the possibly erroneous assumptions in the questions raised by inquirers. For example, a correspondent of the *Path* proposed that since intuition is the "sixth sense," there must be means of giving it training. Judge replied:

> I do not know that it is "according to theosophical teaching that intuition is the sixth sense." It would be well to have citation of chapter or article where this statement is made. The question of the sixth sense is speculative as yet, nothing being decided. Like the fourth dimension, it is involved in doubt. Hence it should not be assumed that the assertion in the question is correct. Many persons hold that intuition is not the sixth sense, because it may very well be that a species of very rapid reasoning enters into intuitional acts, making them so rapid in conclusion as to appear devoid of reasoning as a means to find the conclusion arrived at. For myself I do not believe that

> intuition is the sixth sense nor any sense at all. But whatever intuition is, it can only be cultivated by having the right mental poise, the right philosophy and the right ethics; and by giving the intuition scope, or chance, so that by many mistakes we at last arrive at a knowledge of how to use it. (THEOSOPHY 4:215.)

One does not, then, set out directly to "cultivate the intuition," but rather works toward opening the way to its expression by clearing away obstacles. Filling the mind with right philosophy and ethics, Mr. Judge says, is the means. From this counsel we might go to H.P.B.'s advice on how to study a text such as *The Secret Doctrine*. When, shortly before she died, a member of a study group that met with her in London asked if intense study, always holding in mind first principles, might not prove very fatiguing, she replied:

> The brain is the instrument of waking consciousness, and every conscious mental picture formed means change and destruction of the atoms of the brain. Ordinary intellectual activity moves on well-beaten paths in the brain, and does not compel sudden adjustments and destructions in its substance. But this new kind of mental effort calls for something very different—the carving out of new "brain paths," the ranking in different order of the little brain lives. If forced injudiciously it may do serious physical harm to the brain.
>
> This mode of thinking . . . is what the Indians call *Jnana Yoga*. As one progresses in *Jnana Yoga* one finds conceptions arising which, though one is conscious of them, one cannot express nor yet formulate into any sort of mental picture. As time goes on these conceptions will form into mental pictures. This is a time to be on guard and refuse to be deluded with the idea that the new-found and wonderful picture must represent reality. It does not. As one works on, one finds the once admired picture growing dull and unsatisfying and finally fading out or being thrown away. This is another danger point, because for the moment one is left in a void without any conception to support one, and one may be tempted to revive the cast-off picture for want of a better to cling to. The true student will, however, work on unconcerned, and presently further formless gleams come, which again in time give rise to a larger and more beautiful picture than the last. But the learner will now know that no picture will ever represent the truth. This last splendid picture will grow dull and fade like the others. And so the process goes on, until at last the mind and its pictures are transcended and the learner enters and dwells in the world of no-form, but of which all forms are narrowed reflections.

> The true student of *The Secret Doctrine* is a *Jnana Yogi,* and this Path of Yoga is the True Path for the Western student. It is to provide him with sign-posts on that Path that *The Secret Doctrine* has been written. (THEOSOPHY 43:306-7.)

This is the self-education pursued by one determined to find out the truth about life and the world. Those who undertake it are first made to realize by their own uncertainties that human beings are indeed—as Plato said—halfway between ignorance and knowledge. This "intermediate" condition is explanation enough for most of the difficulty and contradiction we experience in our lives; it may be considered as "normal." Indeed, in the light of H.P.B.'s remarks about study, we see that there can be no finality in our understanding of the archaic teachings; yet at the same time, we may feel increasingly sure that we have discovered the *way* to Truth.

Meanwhile, as we labor on the path, we have our Theosophical work to do. This is clearly indicated in the lines of work. H.P.B. said in the *Key*:

> It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and Reincarnation. Look at the millions of poor and uneducated Buddhists and Hindoos, to whom Karma and reincarnation are solid realities, simply because their minds have never been cramped and distorted by being forced into an unnatural groove. They have never had the innate human sense of justice perverted in them by being told to believe that their sins would be forgiven because another man had been put to death for their sakes.

It begins to become clear that a Theosophical education, first, involves clearing away the barriers of false or distorted belief, so that the natural intelligence and higher longings of human beings may come into play. Then, the doctrines such as the working of Karma, the dual nature of man, the after-death states, and the linkages of man with all nature and his fellows, bringing him to rebirth time after time, throw a great light on the mysteries of existence. Concepts of meaning are formed which, while always subject to revision and expansion, neither mislead the mind nor give excuse for self-indulgence or complacency. The training of the mind "in logical and accurate thought," which H.P.B. so emphatically recommended, is preparation for the unimpeded activity of the higher faculties, leading, finally, to that natural self-reliance and confidence by which freedom is achieved.

These are the considerations which lie behind H.P.B.'s closing observations on education in the *Key*:

> We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. . . . We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education.

SORROW

There is a truth about sorrow which I think may make it seem not so hopeless. There are fewer barriers than we think: there is, in truth, an inner alliance between the soul who would fain give and the soul who is in need. Nature has well provided that not one golden ray of all our thoughts is sped ineffective through the dark; not one drop of the magical elixirs love distils is wasted.

—A. E.

THE WISDOM RELIGION

V: IN RELATION TO BUDDHISM

IN the Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. clears up the misapprehension that had arisen in the public mind after publication of *Esoteric Buddhism*. Explaining that Theosophy is *not* Buddhism, she speaks of

> the prevailing double mistake (*a*) of limiting Theosophy to Buddhism: and (*b*) of confounding the tenets of the religious philosophy preached by Gautama, the Buddha, with the doctrines broadly outlined in "Esoteric Buddhism" . . . The esoteric truths, presented in Mr. Sinnett's work, had ceased to be esoteric from the moment they were made public; nor did it contain the religion of Buddha, but simply a few tenets from a hitherto hidden teaching which are now supplemented by many more, enlarged and explained in the present volumes. . . .
>
> "Esoteric Buddhism" was an excellent work with a very unfortunate title, though it meant no more than does the title of this work, the "SECRET DOCTRINE." . . .
>
> Unwise are those who, in their blind and, in our age, untimely hatred of Buddhism, and, by re-action, of "Budhism," deny its esoteric teachings (which are those also of the Brahmins), simply because the name suggests what to them, as Monotheists, are noxious doctrines. *Unwise* is the correct term to use in their case. For the Esoteric Philosophy is alone calculated to withstand, in this age of crass and illogical materialism, the repeated attacks on all and everything man holds most dear and sacred, in his inner spiritual life. . . . Moreover, Esoteric philosophy reconciles all religions, strips every one of its outward, human garments, and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion. It proves the necessity of an absolute Divine Principle in nature. It denies Deity no more than it does the sun. . . . It only refuses to accept any of the gods of the so-called monotheistic religions, gods created by man in his own image and likeness, a blasphemous and sorry caricature of the Ever Unknowable. Furthermore, the records we mean to place before the reader embrace the esoteric tenets of the whole world since the beginning of our humanity, and Buddhistic occultism occupies therein only its legitimate place, and no more. Indeed, the secret

> portions of the *"Dan"* or *"Jan-na" ("Dhyan")* of Gautama's metaphysics—grand as they appear to one unacquainted with the tenets of the Wisdom-Religion of antiquity—are but a very small portion of the whole. (I, xvii - xx).

Had attention been paid to what H.P.B. had already written in *Isis Unveiled,* such errors might have been avoided. There she had said:

> By *Buddhism* . . . we mean that religion signifying literally the doctrine of wisdom, and which by many ages antedates the metaphysical philosophy of Siddhârtha Sakyamuni. (II, 143.)
>
> We repeat again, *Buddhism is but the primitive source of Brahmanism.* It is not against the primitive *Vedas* that Gautama protests. It is against the sacerdotal and official state religion of his country; and the Brahmans, who in order to make room for and give authority to the castes, at a later period crammed the ancient manuscripts with interpolated slokas, intended to prove that the castes were predetermined by the Creator by the very fact that each class of men was issued from a more or less noble limb of Brahma. Gautama Buddha's philosophy was that taught from the beginning of time in the impenetrable secrecy of the inner sanctuaries of the pagodas. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find again, in all the fundamental dogmas of the Gnostics, the metaphysical tenets of both Brahmanism and Buddhism. (II, 169.)
>
> When we use the term *Buddhists,* we do not mean to imply by it either the exoteric Buddhism instituted by the followers of Guatama-Buddha, nor the modern Buddhistic religion, but the secret philosophy of Sakyamuni, which in its essence is certainly identical with the ancient wisdom-religion of the sanctuary, the pre-Vedic Brahmanism. (II, 142.)
>
> We can assert . . . that there is not one of all these sects—Kabalism, Judaism, and our present Christianity included—but sprung from the two main branches of that one mother-trunk, the once universal religion, which antedated the Vedaic ages—we speak of that prehistoric Buddhism which merged later into Brahmanism. (II, 123.)

In *The Secret Doctrine* she summarizes the mutual position:

> We say it again: archaic Occultism would remain incomprehensible to all, if it were rendered otherwise than through the more familiar channels of Buddhism and Hinduism. For the former is the emanation of the latter; and both are children of one mother—ancient *Lemuro-Atlantean Wisdom.* (I, 668.)

We might conclude by taking particular not of the fact that while H.P.B. made extensive use of those "familiar channels"

for the reason given, she was virtually unique in her capacity to provide correct interpretations. In her article, "World-Improvement or World-Deliverance," in some measure a comparison of Theosophical conceptions with the doctrines of exoteric Buddhism, she observed that from the most eminent scholars "down to the last amateur Orientalist who dabbles in Buddhism disfigured by translation . . . no Sanskrit or Pali scholar has so far understood correctly that which is taught," and in the *Glossary* she concludes the entry under Dugpas by saying that "Northern Buddhism in its purified, metaphysical form is almost entirely unknown."

Again and again, H.P.B. was obliged to make the distinction emphasized in The Secret Doctrine in respect to the title of Mr. Sinnett's book. A further definitive statement comes at the conclusion of her article, "The Theosophical Society: Its Mission and Its Future," in which Emile Bournouf is taken to task for proposing that Theosophical teachings are not needed in Buddhism is already in the world. After extended discussion and criticism of this claim, in which she quoted an adept letter at length, paying high tribute to Buddhism as a religion, she ended by declaring that the truth that is needed by all mankind "is not Buddhism, but esoteric BUDHISM."

OF STUDYING THEOSOPHY

I

WHAT is study? It is not mere reading of books, but rather long, earnest, careful thought upon that which we have taken up. If a student accepts reincarnation and karma as true doctrines, the work is but begun. Many theosophists accept doctrines of that name, but are not able to say what it is they have accepted. They do not pause to find out what reincarnates, or how, when or why karma has its effects, and often do not know what the word means. Some at first think that when they die they will reincarnate, without reflecting that it is the lower personal I they mean, which cannot be born again in a body. Others think that karma is—well, karma, with no clear idea of classes of karma, or whether or not it is punishment or reward or both. Hence a careful learning from one or two books of the statement of the doctrines, and then a more careful study of them, are absolutely necessary.

There is too little of such right study among Theosophists, and too much reading of new books. . . . A proper use of . . . *The Secret Doctrine, The Key to Theosophy,* and all other matter upon the constitution of man, leads to an acquaintance with the doctrines as to the being most concerned, and only when that acquaintance is obtained is one fitted to understand the rest. . . .

Another branch of study is that pursued by natural devotees, those who desire to enter into the work itself for the good of humanity. Those should study all branches of theosophical literature all the harder, in order to be able to clearly explain it to others, for a weak reasoner or an apparently credulous believer has not much weight with others.

Western theosophists need patience, determination, discrimination, and memory, if they ever intend to seize and hold the attention of the world for the doctrines they disseminate. (1)

The wise man sagely said that of making books there is no end. If true in his day, it is the same now.

In the field of every day books there is so much light reading

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NOTE.—This collation from various sources in Theosophical literature, mainly material by Mr. Judge, is reprinted from THEOSOPHY for April, 1958.

that the superficial habit of skimming is plainly everywhere apparent, and it threatens to show itself in theosophical ranks.

So well am I convinced there are too many superfluous books in our particular field, that, if I had a youth to train in that department, I should confine him to the *Bhagavad-Gita,* the *Upanishads,* and the *Secret Doctrine* for a very long time, until he was able to make books for himself out of those, and to apply the principles in them to every circumstance and to his own life and thought.

Those theosophists who only wish to indulge in a constant variety of new theosophical dishes will go on reading all that appears, but the others who are in earnest, who know that we are here to learn and not solely for our pleasure, are beginning to see that a few books well read, well analysed, and thoroughly digested are better than many books read over once. They have learned how all that part of a book which they clearly understand at first is already their own, and that the rest, which is not so clear or quite obscure, is the portion they are to study, so that it also, if found true, may become an integral part of their constant thought. (2)

Western writers have been in the habit of pooh-poohing the idea that we could learn anything from Indian books. . . . But we believe in the cyclic theory, and it teaches us that in the ages man has been upon the earth he has evolved all systems of philosophy over and over again. The reason we turned to Indian books is that that land of all the rest has preserved its old knowledge both in books and monuments. . . . In the Vedas, in Patanjali's Yoga System, the Bhagavad-Gita, and hundreds of other works, can be found the highest morality and the deepest knowledge. (3)

There are several hindrances to the doing of good work by individuals with resulting loss to the movement. These are all surmountable, for hindrances that are insurmountable are nature's own limitations that can be used as means instead of being left as barriers. One of these surmountable and unnecessary hindrances is the prevalent habit of reading trashy and sensational literature, both in newspaper and other form. This stupefies and degrades the mind, wastes time and energy, and makes the brain a storehouse of mere brute force rather than what it should be—a generator of cosmic power. Many people seem to "read from

the pricking of some cerebral itch," with a motive similar to that which ends in the ruin of a dipsomaniac: a desire to deaden the personal consciousness. Sensation temporarily succeeds in drowning the voice of conscience and the pressure that comes from the soul that so many men and women unintelligently feel. So they seek acute sensation in a thousand different ways, while others strive to attain the same end by killing both sensation and consciousness with the help of drugs or alcohol. Reading of a certain sort is simply the alcohol habit removed to another plane, and just as some unfortunates live to drink instead of drinking that they may live, so other unfortunates live to read instead of reading that they may learn how to live. Gautama Buddha went so far as to forbid his disciples to read novels—or what stood for novels in those days—holding that to do so was most injurious. People are responsible for the use they make of their brains for the brain can be used for the noblest purposes and can evolve the most refined quality of energy, and to occupy it continually with matters not only trivial but often antagonistic to Theosophical principles is to be untrue to a grave trust. This does not mean that the news of the day should be ignored, for those who live in the world should keep themselves acquainted with the world's doings: but a fair test is that nothing not worth remembering is worth reading. To read for the sake of reading, and so filling the sphere of the mind with a mass of half-dead images, is a hindrance to service and a barrier to individual development. (4)

The study of Theosophy ought not to be a matter of luxury and convenience, but an uttermost necessity. Unless we feel that study is as necessary to our constitution as physical food is essential to the well-being of the body, we shall not go at the purpose of study with enthusiasm, zeal and persistence—a threefold energy, which carries with it success.

In the first place, then, to feel the absolute necessity for study; secondly, to have a clear idea as to what is to be gained by study. People often, especially in matters of philosophy or with Theosophy, take to it because they want something to believe in. Fundamentally, this attitude goes counter to the whole viewpoint of Theosophy which has nothing to offer us in the shape of belief. Theosophy has to be studied for the purpose of gaining knowledge which can ultimately be experienced. It is *knowledge* which we need to seek, and we should therefore bring to its pursuit the

attitude of the genuine inquirer and student who does not want to establish out of his study that which he himself has already preconceived.

Now, there is a tendency in many Theosophical students to consider themselves finished exponents of the philosophy because they are able to repeat what they have read; yet, they have not thoroughly grasped the meaning of what they express. So, we need to ask ourselves, when we take up "The Ocean of Theosophy," "The Secret Doctrine," or "Isis Unveiled," are we studying the language—the words—or, are we trying to grasp the ideas? If it is the ideas we are trying to grasp, we need to pursue two distinct lines; first, read carefully so that we are able to repeat the ideas, not in the language of the author, but in our own language, in so straightforward and simple a manner that an ordinary intelligent mind can understand what we have been saying. If we have grasped, we get the power of expressing the idea ourselves. The faculty of making clear comes with the understanding. Secondly, one can not be said to have grasped a philosophical idea unless he has seen all that has been said against it—its weaknesses and faults. If one can answer to himself in his own thoughts all the objections that are or possibly can be raised against an idea, then it is clear the idea has been grasped. (5)

Here is a service more needed than any other, which any student can render. The study of the *Key to Theosophy,* as one studies a grammar, the mastery of some one given subject, followed by an effort to write it out, or to speak it, in one's own language for one's self only at first, would assist the student to fix the chief points in his own mind, as well as to express them clearly. A few moments of such study daily, even weekly, would be of immense use to all. We do not need to read so widely, to think so discursively, to have knowledge so profound, or to run so far afield after occult mysteries and laws. We do need, and that urgently, to simplify our thought, to express it lucidly, briefly; to clarify our knowledge *and to live what we know.*

The opportunity thus afforded for doing good is incalculable. All about us are persons straining at the tether of their creeds, eager to break away to pastures of living Truth. Before the great mysteries of Life they stand dumb as the brute, but with enlarged capacity for suffering; endowed with the reason which in the brute is lacking, but which in the man of to-day receives little support,

scant sustenance from all that he has been taught heretofore. If such a man be met, at the critical moment, by a theosophist willing and able to explain and give reason for what he believes; to indicate the bearings of theosophical truths upon the mental, social, and other conditions of the present time; to point out the relations of Karma and Reincarnation to universal law as partly known to the average mind; the value of the service rendered thus becomes evident, the need of self-education among our members is perceived.

The subject must be studied as we study any other. One branch after another may be taken up, each being the object of meditation and reading until we can render a clear account of it to ourselves in our own words, illustrated by our own experience. It is better to know a little very thoroughly, and to frankly say that we know no more (which always placates an inquirer and inspires confidence in our sincerity), than to seek to impress others by the wide range of our thought. We may incite wonder, but we shall not convince or aid. It may seem an insignificant path to point out when one says "Educate yourselves." It is, in fact, an initial step which is also the final step, for it never ends. And if the enlargement of our own minds, the amplifications and serenity of our thought, the clarification of the nature, the knowledge that we have helped others towards these priceless advantages were not sufficient reward for the faithful lover of his kind, reward for labour, inducement for further endeavour, then surely the greatest, the final incentive comes when he remembers that he can help Those who "build the wall" to protect humanity, that he may become Their co-laborer, himself a part of that living wall. The truest way to help is by clearly learning and clearly imparting theosophic truths. It is only done by not straining too far, by educating one's self gradually and thoroughly from the root up, with frequent trials of our own definiteness of idea. (6)

Sources: (1) "Of Studying Theosophy," Wm. Q. Judge, *Path*, January, 1890; (2) "Much Reading, Little Thought," William Brehon (W.Q.J.), *Path*, June, 1890; (3) W.Q.J., *Path*, March, 1888; (4) W.Q.J., *Theosophy*, April, 1896; (5) THEOSOPHY, XI, 405; (6) Jasper Niemand, *Path*, August, 1891.

letters • questions • comment

It is sometimes said that when one comes to Theosophy for the first time in maturity or middle life, the thrill of finding it provides an intensity of purpose which may not develop in those who grew up in a Theosophical environment from childhood. It is difficult to suppose that there is not a great advantage in learning about Theosophy at an early age, yet the importance of a sense of independent discovery cannot be denied. What might be said about these contrasting views?

There is a sense in which the feeling of "independent discovery" cannot be separated from Theosophy itself. That is, a student soon finds that Theosophy is not definable simply in terms of the doctrines presented, but involves processes of growth and change arising from one's own self-motivated search for Truth —an ever-increasing range of perception and realization of the Self—the doctrines being merely aids or tools.

Intensity of purpose and enthusiasm in Theosophical study and work, by the very nature of the undertaking, would seem necessarily to grow out of a number of corresponding attitudes. There needs to be present in the student the desire to *know for himself,* to pursue Truth wherever it may be found and wherever it may lead, and to transmute belief and doctrine into self-knowledge. He must have acquired to some extent the inner conviction that true knowledge exists, that there are knowers of such knowledge, and that the Theosophical philosophy affords the clearest channels for reaching that knowledge. Such convictions come only as a result of serious study and investigation of Theosophical ideas, including comparison of them with other systems of thought. The student would also need to have faith in his own ability to learn and in the capacity of the Teachers of Theosophy to direct him to the most fruitful areas of study and work. Finally, and perhaps most important, he must have awakened in himself the desire to be of service to others.

Those who encounter Theosophy for the first time in maturity, and for whom Theosophical study and work take on great im-

portance, have for the most part been individuals who brought to it something of their own—a hunger to know, to discover satisfactory approaches to answering basic questions, and who find Theosophy to be a philosophy which gives full scope to the intellect, and which the heart can embrace as well. It is doubtful that such inquirers are really coming to Theosophy for the first time; their enthusiasm seems rather to spring from intuitive recognition of a line of work to be once more resumed.

The processes of reaching this position are described by Mr. Crosbie in *Gita Notes* (p. 182-3):

> The course of every Arjuna—and each one of us is just that —is first a recognition that true knowledge must exist, and an ardent desire to obtain that knowledge. Then comes a search for the source of that knowledge; in that search lies the danger for the seeker. He finds many teachers, each with a separate claim to knowledge. While as yet he has no means of determining the true from the false, he will accept ignorantly that teacher or teaching which accords with his ideas and desires. This unfortunately is the course of most seekers. But there are to be found others who examine carefully the fundamental bases of the teachings offered, and who will accept *only that one* whose foundational propositions can be so universally applied that their truth becomes self-evident.

For one who has been presented Theosophical teachings from childhood, Theosophy is likely to remain an accepted body of doctrines, helpful as a guide to conduct, but only a sort of "religion" until he begins an *independent* search and inquiry, involving the mind and the will. It is only when such a search is undertaken that he begins to understand Theosophy in its deeper meaning, and has an opportunity to feel the thrill of discovery experienced by an older person who has contacted Theosophy for the first time. This is because he has contacted it for the first time of his own motion and on his *own terms*. Indeed, there are and have been many active workers in the Movement who, having been raised in the philosophy, eventually made the "leap" from passive acceptance to active study and participation, gaining thereby an intensity of purpose. By such means Theosophy becomes "a *living* philosophy."

What, then, is the value of teaching Theosophical doctrines to children? We might say that there is a stage of life—as well as a stage in human evolution—during which it is *natural* to believe.

A child needs to acquire some structure of ideas concerning what he is and how things work, and a vision of what he may become. Basic ideas of Theosophy such as the omnipresence and sacredness of Life, Karma and Reincarnation, the immortality and reality of the Soul, and the evolution taking place in all nature, are naturally accepted by children. And while such ideas may be adopted in a trusting and unquestioning spirit, they are probably the *least confining* to the developing mind, and are, moreover, conceptions most likely to lead an awakening intelligence along philosophical lines. As he reaches adolescence and early adulthood, when it becomes natural to assume an independent stand and to ask basic questions about life's meaning, he will have much material for him to draw from, and also the ability to see possibilities to which many others are blind. Whatever course he may choose in life, he will have certain distinct advantages, and be better able to think for himself.

The Touchstone

To us whose eyes are blinded to the heights above, by the mists of our own desires, the only rays of light which can illumine the darkness of our journey on the great quest, are the words (whether or not in the form of recognized revelation) left by the masters who have preceded us on the road, and the counsel of our comrades who are bound for the same goal. But words are capable of many interpretations, and the opinions of our comrades are coloured by their own personality—the ultimate touchstone of truth must therefore be looked for in the disciple's own breast.

—Lucifer

THE WORSHIP OF THE DEAD

SOME OF THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIUMSHIP

(*Extracts from a Private Letter*)

QUES.—Is there any intermediate condition between the spiritual beatitude of Devachan and the forlorn shade-life of the only-half-conscious reliquae of human beings who have lost their sixth principle? Because, if so, that might give a *locus standi* in imagination to the "Ernests" and "Joeys" of the spiritual mediums,—the better sort of controlling spirits.

Ans.—Alas! no, my friend; not that I know of. From Sukhava down to the "Territory of Doubt" there is a variety of spiritual states, but I am not aware of any such intermediate condition. The "forlorn shadow" has to do the best it can. As soon as it has stepped outside the Kama-Loka—crossed the "Golden Bridge" leading to the "Seven Golden Mountains"—the *Ego* can confabulate no more with easy-going mediums. No "Ernest" or "Joey" has ever returned from the Rupa-loka, let alone the Arupa-loka, to hold sweet intercourse with men. Of course there is a "better sort of reliquae"; and the "Shells" or "Earth-walkers," as they are here called, are not necessarily *all* bad. But even those who are good are made bad for the time being by mediums. The "Shells" may well not care, since they have nothing to lose anyhow. But there is another kind of "Spirits" we have lost sight of; the suicides and those *killed by accident*. Both kinds can communicate, and both have to pay dearly for such visits. And now to explain what I mean. Well, this class is the one which the French Spiritists call "les esprits souffrants." They are an exception to the rule, as they have to remain within the earth's attraction and in its atmosphere—the Kama-loka—till the very last moment of what would have been the natural duration of their lives. In other words, that particular wave of life-evolution must run on to its shore. But it is a sin and cruelty to revive their memory and intensify their suffering by giving them a chance of living an artificial life, a chance to overload their Karma, by tempting them into open doors, *viz.* mediums and sensitives, for they will have to pay roundly for every such pleasure. I will explain. The *Suicides,* who, foolishly hoping to escape life, find

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themselves still alive, have suffering enough in store for them from that very life. Their punishment is in the intensity of the latter. Having lost by the rash act their 7th and 6th principles, though not forever, as they can regain both, instead of accepting their punishment and taking their chances of redemption, they are often made *to regret life* and tempted to regain a hold upon it by sinful means. In the *Kama-loka,* the land of intense desires, they can gratify their earthly yearnings only through a *living* proxy; and by so doing, at the expiration of the natural term, they generally lose their monad forever. As to the victims of accident, these fare still worse. Unless they were so good and pure as to be drawn immediately within the Akasic Samadhi, *i. e.* to fall into a state of quiet slumber, a sleep full of rosy dreams, during which they have no recollection of the accident, but move and live among their familiar friends and scenes until their natural life-term is finished, when they find themselves born in the Devachan, a gloomy fate is theirs. Unhappy shades, if sinful and sensual they wander about (not shells, for their connection with their two higher principles is not quite broken) until their *death*-hour comes. Cut off in the full flush of earthly passions which bind them to familiar scenes, they are enticed by the opportunities which mediums afford, to gratify them vicariously. They are the Pisachas, the Incubi and Succubi of mediaeval times; the demons of thirst, gluttony, lust, and avarice; Elementaries of intensified craft, wickedness, and cruelty; provoking their victims to horrid crimes, and revelling in their commission! They not only ruin their victims, but these psychic vampires, borne along by the torrent of their hellish impulses, at last—at the fixed close of their natural period of life —they are carried out of the earth's aura into regions where for ages they endure exquisite suffering and end with entire destruction.

Now the causes producing the "new being" and determining the nature of *Karma* are *Trishna* (or tanha)—thirst, desire for sentient existence, and *Upadana,* which is the realisation or consummation of *trishna* or that desire. And both of these the medium helps to develop *ne plus ultra* in an Elementary, be he a suicide or a victim, (alone the Shells and Elementals are left unhurt, tho' the morality of the sensitives can by no means be improved by the intercourse). The rule is that a person who dies a natural death will remain from "a few hours to several short

years" within the earth's attraction, *i. e.* the Kama-loka. But exceptions are the cases of suicides and those who die a violent death in general. Hence one of such Egos who was destined to live —say 80 or 90 years but who either killed himself or was killed by some accident, let us suppose at the age of 20, would have to pass in the Kama-loka not a few years but, in his case, 60 or 70 years as an Elementary, or rather an "earth-walker," since he is not, unfortunately for him, even a "Shell."

Happy, thrice happy, in comparison are those disembodied entities who sleep their long slumber and live in dream in the bosom of Space! And woe to those whose *trishna* may attract them to mediums, and woe to the latter who tempt them with such an easy *upadana*. For in grasping them and satisfying their thirst for life, the medium helps to develop in them—is in fact the cause of—a new set of *Skandhas,* a new body, with far worse tendencies and passions than the one they lost. All the future of this new body will be determined thus, not only by the Karma of demerit of the previous set or group, but also by that of the new set of the future being. Were the mediums and spiritualists but to know, as I said, that with every new "angel guide" they welcome with rapture, they entice the latter into an upadana which will be productive of untold evils for the Ego that will be reborn under its nefarious shadow; that with every seance, especially for materialisation, they multiply the causes for misery, causes that will make the unfortunate Ego fail in his spiritual birth or be reborn into a far worse existence than ever; they would perhaps be less lavish in their hospitality. . . . It is through this that the gross and pernicious doctrine of spirit brides and husbands arises. But one day it will return to curse those who now are guilty of thus attracting these wandering shades into the vehicle of a medium's body; it is now cursing many men who find themselves forever in a mental hell, at war with themselves and with their best thoughts, they know not why. And if some poor suicide, drawn thus down into vicarious existence, "misses his spiritual birth" and loses the monad—the God within, shall no Karma strike those who were the remote or proximate agents? It will.

on the lookout

H.P.B. and the Spiritualists

A defense of H.P.B. in the letter section of last year's July-August *Psychic Observer* deserves notice. Replying to the claim by a writer in an earlier issue of this journal that H.P.B. was a "fraud," Graham Barratt says that reading *The Secret Doctrine* in 1923 drew him from Spiritualism into Theosophy, convincing him that H.P.B. was "the greatest incarnated soul of our times." After briefly adequate attention to the plot of the Coulombs and the evidence they fabricated to persuade Richard Hodgson, investigator for the London Society for Psychical Research, of their false accusations, this writer adds:

> If you read *The Key to Theosophy* (page 27) you will find that H.P.B. does not deny the facts of Spiritualism, but she emphatically denies that materialized forms are "spirits."
>
> "That which does appear objectively, is only the phantom of the ex-physical man. But in psychic, and so to say, 'Spiritual' Spiritualism, we do believe, most decidedly."
>
> Words could hardly be plainer, yet how cruelly H.P.B. has been slandered and crucified as some sort of enemy of Spiritualism! The very early Spiritualists could hardly understand the terms she used; they were so bewildered by their own phenomena and the fact that it happened, that they imagined her as an enemy like all the crusty sceptics of that day. It is about time all that nonsense was undone.

Such forthright statements help to clear the air for students and inquirers of the future, especially those ready to be weaned of attachments to psychic attractions.

A Scientist on Cycles

In *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge refers briefly to the "unknown Saros and Naros and other cycles of the Egyptians," and in *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky quotes Berosus to show the connection of Saros with the Hindu chronology. (I, 655 fn.) In Vol. I (113-14), speaking of the Boundless Circle which represents "limitless Time in Eternity," symbolized by

Kronos for the ancient Greeks, she says: "For the circle is Sar, and Saros, or cycle, and was the Babylonian god whose circular horizon was the visible symbol of the invisible, while the sun was the ONE Circle from which proceeded the Cosmic orbs, and of which he was considered the leader." One seldom sees a reference to the Saros in present-day discussions of cycles, but in a curious article in the Autumn 1977 *American Scholar,* Carl Sagan, who teaches astronomy at Cornell, mentions it in a discussion of odd numerical correspondences. In the following passage he is dealing with the part played as a factor by the number 19:

> Now if we ask how many synodical months there are in 11 sidereal years (or 4,017.8204 mean solar days), we find the answer to be 136.05623. Thus, just as there seems to be a connection between 19 years and 235 new moons, there is a connection between 11 years and 136 new moons. Moreover, the famous British astronomer Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington believed that all of physics could be derived from the number 136. . . .

More than Coincidence?

> One numerical coincidence of this sort, which *is* of deep significance, was well known to the Babylonians, contemporaries of the ancient Hebrews. It is called the saros. It is the period between two successive similar cycles of eclipses. In a solar eclipse, the moon, which appears from earth just as large (1.2°) as the sun, must pass in front of it. For a lunar eclipse, the earth's shadow in space must intercept the moon. For either kind of eclipse to occur, the moon must, first of all, be either new or full—so that the earth, the moon, and the sun are in a straight line. Therefore the synodical month is obviously involved in the periodicity of eclipses. But also, for an eclipse to occur, the moon must be near one of the nodes of its orbit. Therefore the nodical month is involved too. It turns out that 223 synodical months is equal to 241.9989 (or very close to 242) nodical months. This is the equivalent of a little over 18 years and 10 or 11 days (depending on the number of intervening leap days), and comprises the saros. Coincidence?

Prof. Sagan's article is a playful satire on the endeavor of a man called Norman Bloom to prove "the existence of God" by means of numerical coincidences, yet he finds himself fascinated by correlations produced for this purpose. While he doubts that Mr. Bloom is, as he claims, "the Second Coming of Christ," he finds this enthusiast's persistence, skill, and "considerable arithmetic

intuition" a combination of talents that "one might almost say, is God-given."

A Chaldean Astrologer's View

Whatever the significance to be drawn from this account of the saros, it seems clear that Carl Sagan sees it as of some importance. Concerning this period, H.P.B. says in *Isis Unveiled* (I, 30-31):

> At the close of each "great year," called by Aristotle—according to Censorinus—the *greatest,* and which consists of six *sars* our planet is subjected to a thorough physical revolution. The polar and equatorial climates gradually exchange places; the former moving slowly toward the Line, and the tropical zone, with its exuberant vegetation and swarming animal life, replacing the forbidding wastes of the icy poles. This change of climate is necessarily attended by cataclysms, earthquakes, and other cosmical throes. As the beds of the ocean are displaced, at the end of every decimillennium and about one neros, a semi-universal deluge like the legendary Noachian flood is brought about. This year was called the *Heliacal* by the Greeks; but no one outside the sanctuary knew anything certain either as to its duration or particulars.

In a footnote to this passage H.P.B. says:

> Webster declares very erroneously that the Chaldeans called *saros,* the cycle of eclipses, a period of about 6,586 years, "the time of revolution of the moon's node." Berosus, himself a Chaldean astrologer, at the Temple of Belus, at Babylon, gives the duration of the sar, or sarus, 3,600 years; a neros 600; and a sossus 60.

Then, on page 34 (*Isis,* I), she says: "As our planet revolves once every year around the sun and at the same time turns once in every twenty-four hours upon its own axis, thus traversing minor cycles within a larger one, so is the work of the smaller cyclic periods accomplished and recommenced, within the Great Saros."

Self-Reliant Patient

In the *Saturday Review* for May 28, 1977, Norman Cousins, the editor and well-known writer, reprinted from the *New England Journal of Medicine* the story of how he took into his own hands the treatment of a disease (ankylosing spondylitis—disintegration of the connective tissue in the spine) from which, doctors told him, he had one chance in five hundred of recovery, and cured himself. After study of the ill and some consultation, he stopped

taking aspirin (26 a day, as pain-killer) and phenylbutazone (12 a day), since he became convinced that the toxic effect of these drugs made his recovery quite impossible. He began taking large quantities of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), increasing the dose to 25 grams a day. By this and other means (described at length in his article) he made himself well.

He Was Not "Trapped"

In conclusion Mr. Cousins said:

> I was incredibly fortunate to have as my doctor [William Hitzig], a man who knew that his biggest job was to encourage to the fullest extent the patient's will to live and to mobilize all the natural resources of the body and mind to combat disease. Dr. Hitzig was willing to set aside the large and often hazardous armamentarium of powerful drugs available to the modern physician when he became convinced that his patient might have something better to offer. He was also wise enough to know that the art of healing is still a frontier profession. And, though I can't be sure of this point, I have a hunch he believed that my own total involvement was a major factor in my recovery.
>
> People have asked what I thought when I was told by the specialists that my disease was progressive and incurable.
>
> The answer is simple. Since I didn't accept the verdict, I wasn't trapped in the cycle of fear, depression, and panic that frequently accompanies a supposedly incurable illness. I must not make it seem, however, that I was unmindful of the seriousness of my problem or that I was in a festive mood throughout. Being unable to move my body was all the evidence I needed that the specialists were dealing with real concerns. But deep down I knew I had a good chance and relished the idea of bucking the odds. . . .
>
> I have learned never to underestimate the capacity of the human mind and body to regenerate—even when the prospects seem most wretched.

The "Doctor Inside"

One must be grateful to Mr. Cousins for so careful an account of his experience, which seems an excellent example of the right use of human intelligence, self-reliance, and the will to live. In another article on placebos and healing *(Saturday Review,* Oct. 10, 1977), Mr. Cousins provides a concluding remark that seems filled with common sense:

> The mind can carry out its ultimate functions and powers

over the body without the illusion of material intervention. "The mind," said John Milton, "is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven."

Science is concocting exotic terms like *biofeedback* to describe the control by the mind over the autonomic nervous system. But labels are unimportant; what is important is the knowledge that human beings are not locked into fixed limitations. The quest for perfectibility is not a presumption or a blasphemy but the highest manifestation of a great design.

Mr. Cousin ends by quoting from Dr. Albert Schweitzer the answer he gave when Cousins asked him how it could be that African witch doctors seemed able to help people get well. That, Schweitzer said, smiling, is a secret known to doctors since the days of Hippocrates.

"But I'll tell you anyway," he said, his face still illuminated by that half-smile. "The witch doctor succeeds for the same reason all the rest of us succeed. Each patient carries his own doctor inside him. They come to us not knowing that truth. We are at our best when we give the doctor who resides within each patient a chance to go to work."

What We Do Not Know

A wise and pleasurably literate research physician, Dr. Lewis Thomas, author of *The Lives of a Cell,* writes appealingly in the Summer 1977 *Dædalus* about research in modern medicine, ending with some reflections that seem considerably less complacent than those which have in the past characterized the opinions of scientific thinkers. He says:

These ought to be the best of times for the human mind, but it is not so. All sorts of things seem to be turning out wrong, and the century seems to be slipping through our fingers here at the end, with almost all promises unfilled. I cannot begin to guess at all the causes of our cultural sadness, not even the most important ones, but I can think of one thing that is wrong with us and eats away at us: we do not know enough about ourselves. We are ignorant about how we work, about where we fit in, and most of all about the enormous, imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts. We do not really understand nature, at all. Not to downgrade us; we have come a long way indeed, just to have learned enough to be conscious of our ignorance. It is not so bad a thing to be totally ignorant; the hard thing is to be part way along toward real knowledge, far enough to be aware of being ignorant. It is embarrassing and depressing, and it is one of our troubles today.

> It is a new experience for all of us. Only two centuries ago we could explain everything about everything, out of pure reason, and now most of that elaborate and harmonious structure has come apart before our eyes. We are *dumb*.
>
> This is, in a certain sense, a health problem, after all. For as long as we are bewildered by the mystery of ourselves, and confused by the strangeness of our uncomfortable connection to all the rest of life, and dumbfounded by the inscrutability of our own minds, we cannot be said to be healthy animals in today's world.
>
> We need to know more. To come to realize this is what this seemingly inconclusive century has been all about.

Ignorance and Health

Wonderful and sad ironies reside in these thoughtful words. Here is a scientist who accepts the reproofs of experience, who will not repeat the confident expectations of past generations of researchers, and who is willing to admit openly how little we really know about human beings. Yet an intellectual imprisonment by the assumptions of materialism—of Darwinism, specifically—still prevails in his thinking. Man, he says, cannot be a healthy *animal* in his present state of ignorance. But man is *not* an animal, and his ills are largely caused by behavior based on the assumption that he is an animal and nothing more. Nor is the ignorance Dr. Thomas speaks of—that we are "bewildered by the mystery of ourselves"—really a cause of ill-health. In this time and generation, ignorance is the "normal" human condition, and health lies in admitting its reality—as, indeed, Dr. Thomas has done. Ill-health, for humans, grows from what Plato termed *double* ignorance—thinking one knows when one does not—the kind of ignorance against which Socrates contended throughout his life.

"The One Ennobling Religion"

In *Design With Nature* (Doubleday paperback, $6.95), Ian McHarg, a leading landscape architect, has a chapter on what may be learned directly from nature, and on the philosophy which is implied. He adopts the religion of pantheism, finding it the only view consistent with the vast ecological web of life. After considering the potentialities of human understanding and action, he proposes that man's role on earth, as shown by his consciousness and use of symbols, is that of coordinator of interrelationships—he is "steward, the agent of symbioses." Humans become capable of resolving the conflict between freedom and order by learning from

the modes of nature:

> Clearly each individual has a responsibility for the entire biosphere and is required to engage in creative, cooperative activities. Freedom is thought to be inherent in uniqueness and in the infinite opportunities afforded by the environment, that is, modes of existence and expression are unlimited and the unique individual has these inherent opportunities. Anarchy is rejected because it replaces creation with randomness. Tyranny is rejected because it suppresses the uniqueness of the individual and his freedom. Poised between these two extremes is the concept of creation, linked to uniqueness, freedom, and the responsibility wherein the organism might perform any role that is creative and enhances the biosphere and the evolution of apperception and symbioses.

Death Serves Life

There is this concerning death, as seen by the "Naturalists," who are Mr. McHarg's ecological Utopians:

> Now the observed fact that life persists because life eats life is not seen as any contradiction of their propositions, nor, indeed, is death any problem to their cosmography. The operation of the biological world requires that the substance of living creatures and their wastes be consumed by other creatures in the creative process of the world. Man too subscribes to this, knowing that his wastes in life, and his substance after death, will be consumed by other creatures in a creative process. Death is seen in a like way, an indispensable part of a creative process. It is only when death is examined out of context that it appears as a reduction from higher to lower levels of order. As the basis for evolution, itself moving to higher orders, it is creative.

"Beyond Survival"

The course of evolution falls into hierarchies. The resulting levels of order define meaning and obligation for the Naturalists:

> Their hierarchy of requirements for man run the gamut from survival to fulfillment. Beyond survival is mere existence, found simply in the satisfaction of physiological needs. The next level is identified by the presence of dignity; here existence is transcended. The last stage is fulfillment and is known to be unrealizable although it is the omnipresent quest and involves healthy men who not only solve problems but who seek them. In this evolution from survival to fulfillment is a corresponding hierarchy of symbioses. The least of these are the cooperative mechanisms necessary for survival, which ascend in number and complexity and reach their highest state in these symbioses which are altruistic and can be better described as love.

> Cooperative relationships are essential for survival as for fulfillment, but their nature has changed in this evolution from a mutuality of interest essential to survival to the transcendent form of love.

"Whatever Thou Doest"

The pantheism felt spontaneously by the Naturalists regards the entire phenomenal world as having "godlike attributes." As a result, "the relations of man to this world are sacramental." "If divinity there is," Prof. McHarg says, then all is divine." And if this is the case, "then all the acts of man in nature are sacramental." This present-day expression of the "religion of nature" recalls the statement of Krishna in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

> I accept and enjoy the offerings of the humble soul who in his worship with a pure heart offereth a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water unto me. Whatever thou doest, O son of Kuntî, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me.

"Life" on Mars?

The scientists who had hoped to find out a great deal about Mars from research pursued with the instruments of the two Viking spacecraft, whose "landers" found sites on the red planet in the summer of 1976, are uncertain in their conclusions. To the question, Is there life on Mars?, they reply that they couldn't find any, yet they say that the conditions of life seem present there. The planet is extremely dry, although it has ice at its poles. Conditions there, they report, are such that "liquid water cannot remain in the liquid phase; depending on the temperature, it must either freeze or evaporate." No raindrops can form in the atmosphere, and ice cannot melt. Yet, according to a report by Norman Horowitz in the *Scientific American* for November, "the elements necessary for life are available on Mars." Nitrogen is in the atmosphere. Mr. Horowitz says:

> The extreme dryness presents a difficult problem for any Martian biology. Liquid water is essential for life on the earth. All terrestrial species have high and apparently irreducible requirements for water; none could live on Mars. If there is life on Mars, it must operate on a different principle as far as water is concerned. If Mars had a more favorable environment in the past, however, and if the planet did not dry up too fast, species may have had time to evolve and adapt to present conditions.

Mars in "Obscuration"

While this is of course speculation, it seems open-minded enough. That "life" has existed on Mars is beyond doubt, Theosophically speaking. H.P.B. remarks (*Secret Doctrine* II, 699) that the adept astronomers of the earliest Aryan sub-races were scientists who "seem to have known far more about the races of Mars and Venus than the modern Anthropologist knows of those of the early stages of the Earth." In respect to the apparent barrenness of the planet, one might thing this to be expected, since an adept communication (*S.D.* I, 165) informs us that "Mars is in a state of obscuration at present, and Mercury just beginning to get out of it." With these considerations in mind, the findings of the Viking spacecraft acquire a measure of interest. Mr. Horowitz writes:

> When it is recalled that the temperature at the surface of Mars at the two landing sites does not rise above zero degrees C. at any time, and that the temperature below the surface is even lower, it becomes difficult to reconcile the results [of certain "life-detecting" experiments] with a biological source. Any organisms living in the Martian soil should have been killed by those temperatures.

Lack of "Proof"

> On the other hand, it is not easy to point to a nonbiological explanation for the positive results . . . a biological explanation will continue to be a remote possibility. . . . At least those areas on Mars examined by the two spacecraft are not habitats of life. Possibly the same conclusion applies to the entire planet, but that is an intricate problem that cannot yet be addressed. The most surprising finding of the life-seeking experiments is the extraordinary chemical reactivity of the Martian soil: its oxidizing capacity, its lack of organic matter down to the level of several parts per billion and its capacity to fix atmospheric carbon (presumably into organic molecules) at a still lower level. It seems that Mars has a photochemically activated surface that, due to the low temperature and the absence of water, is maintained in a state far from chemical equilibrium.
>
> These conclusions drawn from the results of the life-seeking experiments on the Viking landers are undeniably disappointing. The discovery of life would have been much more interesting, to say the least. There are doubtless some who, unwilling to accept the notion of a lifeless Mars, will maintain that the interpretation I have given is unproved. They are right. It is impossible to prove that any of the reactions detected by the Viking instruments were not biological in origin. It is equally impossible to prove from any results of the Viking experiments

that the rocks seen at the landing sites are not living organisms that happen to look like rocks.

"Quite Occult Theories"

Mr. Horowitz finds this completely fanciful, of course; he speaks as a scientist who will attempt to draw firm conclusions only from solid evidence. Generally speaking, we may be thankful for that. Meanwhile, it is of interest that H.P.B. gave serious attention to a hypothesis proposed in 1881 by Mattieu Williams, one neglected by astronomers. Speaking of the temperatures on the various planets, Williams referred to the critical state in which gases and liquids are "continuous," proposing what H.P.B. calls "some quite occult theories" about the planets. He wrote:

> Our notions of solids, liquids, and gases are derived from our experiences of the state of matter here upon this Earth. Could we be removed to another planet, they would be curiously changed. On Mercury water would rank as one of the condensible gases; on Mars, as a fusible solid; but what on Jupiter? . . . we may infer that *the oceans of Jupiter are neither of frozen, liquid, nor gaseous water, but are aceans or atmospheres of critical water. If any fish or birds swim or fly therein, they must be very critically organized.*

After this long quotation from Mattieu Williams, H.P.B. concludes: "It is gratifying to see how *scientific imagination* approaches every year more closely to the borderland of our occult teachings." (*S.D.* II, 136-37 fn.)

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